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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5182
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3752
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0968
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3824
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1086
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2903
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7678
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5359
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0207
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2043
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR S GROFF, D TETER, D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MALDIVES MILITARY SINKS SUSPECTED LTTE
WEAPONS SHIP

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: At approximately 8:25 a.m. on May 17, the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) fired on a 75 foot-long vessel suspected of trafficking weapons for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The MNDF's actions came after a 12-hour standoff with the vessel near the Gaaf Alif atoll during which a man speaking in the south Indian language Malayalam abandoned ship and turned himself over to authorities. He told the MNDF that the remaining four men were LTTE cadres who had hijacked the boat, throwing all other crew members overboard. He alleged that he was kept on board for his technical expertise in the event that the vessel encountered any problems. The head of the Maldivian Coast Guard Zakaria Mansoor, told a media source that he believed the ship was actually destroyed by the crew rather than by fire from the Coast Guard vessel to ensure that the ship's contents were not captured. END SUMMARY.

MALDIVES FLEXES ITS MILITARY MUSCLE

12. (SBU) At approximately 12:30 p.m. on May 16, a Maldivian fishing vessel carrying a crew of 16 was fired upon by a 75-foot trawler flying the Sri Lankan flag, the "Sri Krishna," when the Maldivian fishing vessel began to approach the trawler. The MNDF was alerted and engaged the trawler with the Coast Guard boat "Huravee" in what amounted to a 12-hour stand-off in the waters near Gaaf Alif atoll in the southern Maldives. Shortly after the stand-off began, one of the five crew members aboard the trawler jumped overboard and was captured by the Huravee. The man, who identified himself as a Malayalam-speaking Indian fisherman, told MNDF that the other four crew members aboard the trawler were LTTE cadres with a boatload of guns and mortars to be used in the Sri Lankan conflict. He alleged that his original crew members were thrown overboard along with the fishing equipment, but that he was kidnapped and held by the LTTE cadres because of

his technical expertise in the event the trawler broke down.

13. (SBU) After several hours during which warning shots were fired at the trawler by the Huravee, the trawler attempted to flee rather than be boarded for inspection. The Huravee opened fire on the vessel, which caught fire. However, the head of the Maldivian Coast Guard, Zakaria Mansoor, told one of Embassy's media sources that he believed the ship was actually destroyed by the LTTE cadres to ensure that the ship's contents were not captured. The four LTTE cadres abandoned the sinking vessel and were kept afloat in the water with lifejackets until the MNDF were able to verify that none of them had explosive devices on them. They are now in MNDF custody.

14. (C) COMMENT: The sinking of yet another 75-foot arms trawler will no doubt be a blow to the Tigers' efforts to keep themselves resupplied. This action marks the first time since the conflict restarted in 2006 that the Maldivian government has taken steps to interdict a suspected LTTE boat. It may simply have been the first such opportunity. While Maldives has typically taken a hands-off approach to the Sri Lankan conflict, its security cooperation with Sri Lanka is generally good. In this case, the Maldivian forces can expect loud cheers and gratitude from their Sri Lankan counterparts.

BLAKE